



A Christmas Blessing



Dear Friend,

You are never far from our thoughts, and always have a special place in our Masses and prayers.

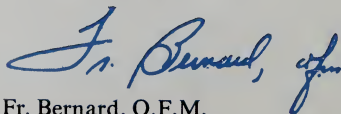
As Christmas comes, our hearts overflow with gratitude to you for all you do so faithfully for our Franciscan missionaries, and the poor they try to help and serve.

This booklet is a tiny token, a Christmas gift of prayer and praise to God, to thank you on behalf of our missionaries and their people, especially the little children.

By your charity, and your daily example of a good Christian life you, too, are a missionary who preaches the good news Christ came on earth to give us.

May our infant Savior bless and reward you abundantly in this Christmas season, and all through the year ahead!

Yours ever gratefully,



Fr. Bernard, O.F.M.
Director



Novena to the Christ Child

Daily Novena Prayer

Heavenly Father, in your merciful kindness you sent your only Son, our Lord Jesus, to save us when we were strayed and lost. As a tiny baby He came among us to win our love and touch our hearts. Help us, Father Almighty, to understand the extent of your loving goodness, so visible in the humble life of your divine Son. By the intercession of our Virgin-Mother, Mary most holy, assist us to imitate her faith in our daily life.

First Day

God's Word: All this is the work of the kindness of our God; He, the **Dayspring**, shall visit us in His mercy . . . to guide our feet into the way of peace. (Luke 1:78-79).

Thought: God became man that we might be reconciled to God. Almighty power assumed the weakness of our nature to win our love. He came that we might have abundant life.

Prayer: Father in heaven, we are powerless to please you without your help. Your only Son, our Lord Jesus, by His life and death broke the chains of sin and death that held us bound. He came as an infant among us so that the power of God might be made manifest in an infant's helplessness, and that we might see strength made perfect in weakness. Help us, Father, to fathom the mystery of Christ's birth. Amen.

Practice: In honor of the child Jesus resolve now to put up patiently with any inconvenience you may encounter today.

Second Day

God's Word: This is my beloved Son. My favor rests on Him. (Matthew 3:17).

Thought: Christ, our Lord, knew His Father's will and did it in spite of pain, suffering, and a cruel death. God's favor rests on us, too, when we imitate our Savior, and keep God's word.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, in the scene at Bethlehem we behold the three on earth who

did your holy will, the infant Jesus, His mother Mary, and His foster father, St. Joseph. By their example and aid help us now to imitate Christ's humility, the faith of Mary, Virgin and Mother, and the obedience of St. Joseph. Amen.

Practice: Let us resolve to honor the Holy Family at Bethlehem by following God's commandments today rather than our own inclinations.

Third Day

God's Word: To His own He came, yet His own did not accept Him. Any who did accept Him He empowered to become children of God. (John 1:11-12).

Thought: To be counted as God's own we must be one with Christ our Lord. To accept Christ as our Savior we must imitate Him, and become like Him in every way.

Prayer: Father in heaven, the Christ child in His crib reminds us of His command to become like little children trusting confidently in you alone, our Father, with the confidence and guilelessness of a child. Help us, Lord, not to prove wicked, greedy, and selfish as we contemplate Christ's humble birth, and always to model our life and hopes on Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Practice: Sit down quietly today for just five minutes to tell the infant Jesus that you really wish to love Him. Ask His help.

Fourth Day

God's Word: There was no room in the place where travelers lodged. (Luke 2:7).

Thought: No pain is keener than that of generous love rejected. The world had no room for Christ, and we are to expect the fate of our Savior.

Prayer: Father all-loving, the children of this world seldom appreciate where true joy is to be found. They had no room for the Holy Family, they slaughtered the Holy Innocents, eventually they crucified our Lord. Help us in your loving kindness to see Christ, Himself, in all who are in need, and to treat each person we encounter as if he were the Lord, Himself. Amen.

Practice: Christ can always be found in His poor, the lonely, the neglected, and in anyone who suffers.

Fifth Day

God's Word: I come to proclaim good news to you—tidings of great joy to be shared by the whole people. (Luke 2:10).

Thought: We seldom appreciate how good the news of our redemption by Christ. Like all good news it is intended to be shared.

Prayer: Father in heaven, how great our joy should be in calling you Father, in knowing your Son as our brother. Help us to realize

how little the circumstances of our life mean in comparison, how petty our selfish concerns. By your saving grace assist us in keeping close to Christ, and in sharing the good news of our salvation with all who have not heard or understood it. Amen.

Practice: Proclaim the good news today by being kind to some person you may dislike.

Sixth Day

God's Word: They went in haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. (Luke 2:16).

Thought: How prompt the shepherds were to answer the angel's message! How prompt we should be on hearing God's word in hastening to do it.

Prayer: Father all-powerful, the news of Christ's coming was first conveyed to the poor shepherds, not to the rich and comfortable. Help us to respond speedily to your will in all we do. In obeying your word we will find the happiness and peace we seek, we will see Christ the Lord in all the vicissitudes of this life. Amen.

Practice: Accept with joy today some pain or trouble in honor of the infant Savior.

Seventh Day

God's Word: Mary treasured all these things and reflected on them in her heart. (Luke 2:19).

Thought: We must always think and pray on the mysteries of Christ's life, death, and resurrection so we know what response they demand of us.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, in your kindness send your Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds and strengthen our resolve. By the intercession of the blessed Virgin Mary we learn the secret of prayerful meditation on the mysteries of our faith. May we by your gracious favor become ever closer in mind and heart to your divine Son. Amen.

Practice: Please try once today to set aside ten minutes in which to honor Mary, our Mother, by reflecting in prayer on Christ's birth.

Eighth Day

God's Word: The grace of God has appeared offering salvation to all men. (Titus 2:11).

Thought: God offers happiness to all of us. We, in turn, must accept His message, and begin to love God and neighbor as Christ commanded us.

Prayer: All-loving Father, you have created each of us with love and without our cooperation, but you will not save us without it. Help us, Father, to receive the Gospel message with grateful heart, and to practice what it demands with a single-minded and sincere resolve to be like your divine Son, and to please you in all things as He did. Amen.

Practice: With God's aiding grace resolve to be meek and gracious to everyone you meet today.

Ninth Day

God's Word: On entering they found the child with Mary, His mother. (Matthew 2:11).

Thought: The wise men from the East eventually found Christ, too, though it took them longer than it did the simple shepherds.

Prayer: Most loving Father, you guided the wise men in their search for the newborn King as you did the shepherds. They understood at once, worshipped the infant Savior, and presented their gifts. Help us in our pilgrimage to heaven to be as wise as the Magi, and as simple as the shepherds in finding Christ, our Lord, and worshipping Him in sincerity of heart. Amen.

Practice: As a return of God's love decide today to forgive completely anyone who ever has tried to hurt or harm you.

Daily Prayer of Petition

In your loving kindness, Infant Savior, I beg your aid amid my own necessities and anxieties. All my cares I offer you in humble worship and confidence.

Please be mindful, too, of the Holy Father, our Bishops, our Pastors, and all priests and religious who are shepherds of our souls. Fortify them as you also strengthen and help our magistrates and civil rulers, and protect our country against its enemies.

Assist and sustain all who suffer, the sick, the destitute, prisoners, and all who are in any way afflicted. Have pity, too, most merciful Savior, on all who have not yet heard the good news of your salvation. Please send them apostolic missionaries.

Bless us all, Lord Jesus, and lead us safely to your heavenly kingdom. Amen.

Prayer to Jesus, Our Brother

Lord Jesus, help us to share your desire for the salvation of the whole world. This desire you daily renew for us in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Lord Jesus, you are always ready to intercede for us and assist us. Please open our eyes to the needs of your other brothers for whom you died as you did for me.

Let me help them, please, by prayer, penance, and sacrifice to receive your message as gladly and freely as it was given to us. By leading a life worthy of your sacrifice may we proclaim your message, make the earth holy, and be the light of the world. Amen.

Prayer of Praise and Petition to the Infant Jesus

In adoration we kneel before your crib. You wish, little Lord Jesus, only our love and affection. You come to us as a little child the better to win our hearts.

Though you are our all-powerful God, you conceal your divinity for love of us. For our sake you wish to be weak, helpless, and wholly dependent on us creatures you, yourself, made. Thus, you show how necessary it is for us to be humble, obedient, and as trusting as you were.

Assist us in your tender mercy to imitate you, to rule by serving, to conquer by loving, to be great by becoming little, to be powerful when weakest, to gain life eternal by losing one's life for your sake. So will we be happy always by following your commands and example.

May your holy Virgin-Mother, Mary, assist us. Amen.





Our New Year Blessing

May your New Year be a time of peace, joy, and serenity!

May each day bring you closer to Christ and more loving to those in your family!

May each week see your advancing in the practice of faith, hope, and charity!

May each month give to you the aid, comfort and strength you need from God!

May the march of the seasons make you appreciate and be grateful for all the good things you enjoy!

May the end of the new year find you happier, healthier, and holier than you have ever been!

AMEN.

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